

East comes to Osho: Chinese, Koreans, Japanese are new visitors

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WHEN JANE decided to visit the Osho Meditation Resort in PUNE last year, it was one of the few times the 32-year-old mother of two had ventured out of China on her own. But this year, on her second visit to the place, she is convinced that this will be an annual ritual for her.

It is the second visit for Angie, 30, from Hong Kong, too. A psychotherapist, she says Osho's unique method of combining meditation with self-develop-

ment has given her the answers that she was seeking. She too promises to be back.

Although the meditation resort, earlier known as Rajneesh ashram and then as Osho Commune, sees many foreigners — the international community accounts for 38 per cent of its visitors — the visitors' profile has seen a gradual change over the last few years. While it was earlier known to attract Americans

and Europeans (mostly Germans and Italians), it is now playing host to a significant number of visitors from the East, including China, Japan and Korea.

"It's a trend that began about three-four years ago. Slowly and steadily, we are seeing a conspicuous presence of visitors from these countries. The reason is simple. China, Japan and Korea have, of late, seen the kind of wealth that only the West had earlier. This had two consequences. One, they have realised that wealth does not necessarily translate into happiness. Two, their affluence has enabled them

to travel and seek spirituality. Because you need a certain degree of affluence to be able to afford to leave work and come to a place like Osho's," says Sudheer, 65, an expert in sound technology who lives in Amsterdam but travels around the world holding workshops on Osho's teachings.

According to Ma Amrit Sadhana, spokesperson of the resort, the influx from the East as well as places like Russia and Israel is also linked to the promotion of Osho books and DVDs in these countries.

"Osho is probably the most



Thirty-eight per cent visitors are foreigners

published person in the world. His books have been translated into many languages that include Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. This gives them a taste of what he preached, and then they want to come here to get the complete experience," says Vatayan, 66, a retired teacher from Germany.

She, however, points out that the number of German followers has not declined. The only difference is that many now follow Osho's preachings online.

"There are 4.5 million fans of Osho on Facebook in 13 languages. Besides English, the top

language pages on Facebook are Spanish, Hindi, Turkish and German. iOSHO, an online subscription programme offering Osho meditation to anyone, anytime, anywhere has also made a huge impact," says Anil, a chartered accountant who looks after the digital world of the meditation resort.

"In China, Vietnam, Russia, the first thing that appeals to people is the switch from God to godliness... Most of them have rarely travelled outside their country, and once they hear about Osho, they try and visit the resort," he says.